



**Relentlessly focused on increasing the number of
Tennesseans with a postsecondary credential**

Higher Education and Public Policy Internship Program

**Tennessee Higher Education Commission
Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation**

For application submissions, questions, or additional information, please contact Taylor Odle,
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The Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) and Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation (TSAC) sponsor a Higher Education and Public Policy Internship Program to expose graduate and undergraduate students to the state-level coordination and operation of the higher education enterprise. Interns engage in THEC/TSAC's programmatic, research, and policy operations through an individually-tailored educational experience. Interns learn more about higher education and current trends through structured readings, attendance at Commission and Board meetings, shadowing senior leadership, working on staff- and state-related projects, and completing a final project suited to their area(s) of focus.

About THEC/TSAC

THEC/TSAC is relentlessly focused on increasing the number of Tennesseans with a postsecondary credential by working to develop, implement, and evaluate postsecondary education policies and programs in the State of Tennessee. The agency creates and maintains a policy environment focused on the Drive to 55, innovates for student access and success, and works to protect students and consumers.

THEC was created in 1967 by the Tennessee General Assembly to achieve coordination and foster unity with regard to higher education in the state, while TSAC was created in 1974 as a non-profit corporation with the merging of the Tennessee Educational Loan Corporation and the Tennessee Tuition Grant Program. THEC and TSAC coordinate and provide guidance to public institutions in Tennessee, including the institutions governed by the University of Tennessee, the Tennessee Board of Regents, and the six locally-governed state universities. THEC/TSAC oversees an array of finance, academic, research, outreach, and consumer protection initiatives that promote student success and support the state's completion agenda. THEC/TSAC actively seeks to develop policy recommendations, programmatic initiatives, and partnerships that increase educational attainment in the state while improving higher education access and success for all Tennesseans.

THEC/TSAC employs approximately 130 staff members across twelve divisions. For more information on the agency, please visit <https://www.tn.gov/content/tn/thec.html>.

The Internship

THEC/TSAC hosts interns each summer (approximately May to August). Positions are open to undergraduate and graduate students with relevant experience and acceptable qualifications. THEC/TSAC's internship program offers participants the opportunity to learn from and contribute to the agency's ongoing efforts to coordinate higher education in Tennessee, advance student access and completion, and produce a more educated workforce. Interns work across the agency's five bureaus: Academic Affairs & Student Success; Finance & Administration; Legal & External Affairs; Planning & Research; and Student Aid & Compliance. Internships are paid positions, and interns may earn academic or professional credit for participation.

About

Interns have a unique opportunity to work in a fast-paced environment while gaining real-world experience in postsecondary education policy development, research, and government relations. THEC/TSAC interns play a critical role in assisting agency staff as they research, generate, and advance policy ideas that deliver student opportunity and workforce development. Interns focus on salient

postsecondary education policy issues, such as college affordability, state financial aid, program evaluation, student and family outreach, college access and success, communications/external relations, and others.

While learning from and contributing to the work of THEC/TSAC, interns also engage in academic and professional development activities. Prior to joining our team, interns engage in suggested pre-program readings from academic journals and policy organizations, in addition to introductory conference calls. While at THEC/TSAC, interns may participate in agency-arranged meetings with professors, social events with interns from other agencies, and lectures by leading academic and policy minds.

Interns develop an independent, culminating project focused on a research idea, program development, or policy intervention to advance student success and deliver a policy plan presentation to THEC/TSAC's senior leadership team before the conclusion of the internship.

Responsibilities

The primary responsibility of interns is to support their bureau(s) and division(s) by:

- Collaborating with state and agency experts in postsecondary education policy to develop research ideas and/or policy recommendations;
- Conducting literature reviews and policy scans on issues related to college readiness, access, financial aid, and success;
- Attending and summarizing education-related meetings and legislative hearings;
- Analyzing quantitative and qualitative data to inform policy analysis, development, and recommendations;
- Developing evidence-based materials to support the agency's operation; and
- Assisting in administrative work.

Interns are embedded within and across respective bureaus and divisions. Therefore, the work of some interns may be more programmatic or technical than others. The internship is a highly-flexible opportunity, with day-to-day work responsibilities and weekly projects developed in consultation with a respective division director. Interns are members of the THEC/TSAC team and are expected to fully engage and perform with respect to their job duties.

Qualifications

Ideal applicants will possess an interest in higher education policy, supplemented by research, advocacy, or program-based experience in the field, in addition to:

- General knowledge of higher education issues from a state and/or national level;
- Demonstrated experience in examining educational challenges from an empiric and public policy perspective;
- Analytical research skills, including use of Excel and/or SPSS/Stata; and
- Excellent written and oral communication skills.

Applicants should be a matriculating, current, or recent graduate of an undergraduate or graduate program in statistics, public policy, education, or a related discipline.

Interns may earn academic credit for a practicum or internship experience in accordance with their institution's academic policies. It is the intern's responsibility to notify THEC/TSAC of their program's specific requirements for hours, project completion, and the like.

To Apply

Interested applicants should submit a cover letter, resume, academic transcript(s), and writing sample by April 1. All materials should be submitted to taylor.odle@tn.gov.

The cover letter should detail your interest in the position, relevant experience, academic and professional qualifications, and highlight potential areas of focus for research or projects, if selected. Please also identify one academic and one professional reference, providing contact information for each. Indicate your division(s) of interest in your cover letter. Your resume should include your GPA, major(s) or program concentration(s), expected graduation date(s), and highlight relevant public policy, research, or employment experience. For your writing sample, please respond to the following question in no more than 2 double-spaced pages:

Tennessee has led the nation in innovative postsecondary education policies, instituting the nation's first full outcomes-based funding formula, offering the first statewide Promise scholarship program, and achieving the highest FAFSA completion rate in the country for the past several years. Considering Tennessee's position as a national leader and innovator, what postsecondary education challenges still exist and how can education researchers, policymakers, and governing bodies/THEC/TSAC address them?